



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021

Diverge  
CONSULTING

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## MANAGERS REPORT

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The world was hoping 2021 would bring a reprieve from the Covid-19 pandemic we had managed for the previous 12 months. This was not to be and further and more challenging variants of the disease continued to effect lives and businesses around the world. Australia was relatively lucky in terms of the severity of the virus and although restrictions were significant this resulted in a much lower loss of life than in many other first world countries. Given these significant challenges Diverge Consulting staff continued to provide vital psychological support to some of societies most vulnerable people.

In early 2021 Diverge employed a Practice Manager to assist with the ongoing day-to-day challenges of running a growing practice. Unfortunately, this was not a successful position and we reverted to a single point of contact for all business management decisions. This is likely to be reviewed again in the year ahead.

As the year progressed Diverge services were continuing to be in high demand and we employed our 3<sup>rd</sup> registrar. Dr. Brendan McLaren joined the Diverge team in July 2021 and relocated to Geelong to become another addition to our team in the Barwon-Southwest region. At the same time Diverge took the step of renting new office space in Geelong and we now have a room available 2 days a week for staff and clients at La Trobe Health Group. This has been a successful expansion and offers Geelong based staff access to a space to see clients for 1:1 work and assessments when appropriate. Supervision for Geelong based staff also occurs in the Geelong rooms on a fortnightly basis.

The year continued to present challenges for staff with the need to navigate the safety requirements of managing Covid restrictions whilst continuing to provide a much-needed service to clients. Home based contact between clinicians and clients resumed and the provision of telehealth assessments and appoints gradually began to reduce. Diverge was able to get back to providing services in the preferred manner and effect evidence-based manner of home or community delivered supports.

Late in 2021 we enjoyed a wonderful planning day that was hosted by Jan Loewy (long term team member and mentor) at her lovely home in Point Lonsdale. It was fabulous to get all our staff together in a relaxed environment away from the office setting for valuable discussion and collaboration about how to continue the valuable growth of Diverge. We look forward to 2022 with renewed hope and enthusiasm for the future.



*Samantha Burns*

*Manager*

MA (Clinical Neuropsychology)

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

*“Whatever it takes...”*

During recent months, the team have revisited some of seminal articles that informed the Diverge approach when the organisation was established in 2009, including the “Whatever it takes” model (Willer and Corrigan, 1984). This model is based on the premise that community-based brain injury rehabilitation is complicated, reflecting as it does the complexity of the real world as compared to the more structured and predictable world of clinic-based approaches. To this end, the model emphasises the need to be practical, innovative, and flexible to solve the everyday problems faced by individuals and their families after ABI.

Over 2021, the challenges presented by the ongoing Covid epidemic, with storms and earthquakes thrown in for good measure, have highlighted the importance of doing “whatever it takes” to get through, with the Diverge team continuing to demonstrate the tremendous flexibility, creativity and resilience shown during 2020. I would particularly like to thank the Diverge team for their willingness to tackle the challenge of managing Covid as we returned to community-based work. This included fronting up willingly for vaccines, wearing masks to protect the team and our clients, and modifying work practices. I would like to acknowledge Kath in particular, for her commitment in developing and updating the Covid infection management guidelines.

As well as providing care to our clients throughout this time, I would like to acknowledge the efforts that all Diverge team members made to look after each other through good humour, supportive words, and caring actions, such as surprise gifts to boost spirits and the re-emergence of the “Star of the Week”.

There have been a number of personal and professional milestones that have occurred during 2021. I would like to welcome Dr. Brendan McLaren as the newest neuropsychology registrar to join Diverge, and to congratulate him on the birth of his daughter. Other achievements were staff members getting through another year juggling online learning with working as a neuropsychologist, a wedding, house purchases, becoming a grandparent, completing an online degree, presenting an online conference workshop, attaining supervisor status (online of course!) and conquering the integration of Halaxy and Xero (well done Jane and Sienna!). Another big achievement for 2021 is the development and launch of the new Diverge Website, reflecting a more positive, optimistic and user-friendly face of the organisation to the world. Looking back on these achievements, all Diverge team members can be confident that they indeed have the capacity and courage to do “Whatever it takes” to provide a quality service to clients with brain injury and their families, regardless of any changes and challenges that may lie ahead in 2022 and beyond.



**Genevieve McMahon**  
*Diverge COM President*  
 MA (Clinical Neuropsychology,  
 MCFT, Grad DIP (Mental Health Sciences))

*Whatever It Takes: a model for community-based services. Willer, B. and Corrigan, J.D., Brain Injury, 1994, 8(7), 647-659*

## TREASURERS REPORT

The financial year 2021 was a period of challenge for Diverge Consulting and all businesses given the lengthy impact of Covid-19. Demand for services continued to grow despite the substantial financial challenges of the Covid 19 business disruption as well as the expansion of staffing and increased business demand. There was another increase in income and an increase in expenses this year with an associated increase in wages, superannuation, and increased business management costs associated with Covid 19 safety requirements for staff and clients. All these areas are fundamental to the effective operation of the business and diverge continues to face the challenge of supporting business development whilst maintaining adequate income to support expenses.

Given this consideration, the basic business figures for the 2021 year are provided below. In addition, a comprehensive financial report and audit has been completed by our accountants Collins & Co. and was presented at the AGM on November 18th, 2021.

### Diverge Consulting Financial Summary 2021

	Amount
Starting Balance	\$ 135,871
Expenses	\$ 984,980
Income	\$ 1,028,720
Ending Balance	\$179,611

These figures highlight ongoing increases in business expenses that are predominantly being incurred as we attempt to manage and develop the clinical areas that we work within. In addition, there were associated costs in the immediate and necessary development of telehealth psychological services requiring the team use of secure online platforms including Covui & Zoom. There was also a requirement for the business to cover the costs for staff and clients to be appropriately protected from Covid-19 as much as possible – these costs were significant for PPE (masks, face shields), disinfectant and hand sanitiser. The year ahead will provide the team with new opportunities to manage our core income producing activity with development goals and will require ongoing budget planning, management, and oversight to ensure all business and budget requirements continue to be met. Diverge faces these challenges with enthusiasm and optimism and we look forward to another exciting year ahead. We had anticipated a year of stabilisation in 2021 however we were forced to confront and manage the incredible challenges presented by Covid and I believe the Diverge team has managed those with a high degree of success both professionally and financially.

*Samantha Burns*  
Treasurer

## REFERRAL COORDINATORS REPORT

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In 2021 Diverge received 162 referrals and re-referrals. These came from several sources including Transport Accident Commission, work safe Victoria, Department Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria (DFFH), National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (plan managed and self-managed) Support Coordinators, Case Managers, Department of Justice – Corrections Victoria, Monash Health, ABI services Ballarat, MS Society, other allied health workers, family members and clients themselves, solicitors, physicians, and general practitioners.

The services for referral included neuropsychology assessment, capacity assessment, paediatric assessment, functional assessment, behaviour management and support, staff training, return to work, counselling, school transition support, family education and counselling, secondary and tertiary consultations, mental health treatment plans for counselling and anxiety management. As the pandemic continued into 2021, Diverge was unable to continue assessment services in the prison system in the Northern Territory due to travel and quarantine restrictions.

Diverge clinicians were unable to travel throughout metropolitan Melbourne, and regional Victoria, for most of 2021 due Covid restrictions in place, but they continued to provide many services via telehealth, across a variety of online platforms, including CoviU and Zoom. With restrictions easing and vaccination coverage rising towards the end of 2021, clinicians were able to resume seeing clients in their homes and communities later in the year.



*Jane Jackson*  
*Referral Co-ordinator*

## NEUROPSYCHOLOGY ASSESSMENT UNIT REPORT

We received ninety-two referrals for neuropsychology assessment at Diverge this year, consistent with the high demand in recent years. Referrals came from NDIS and TAC support co-ordinators, disability support services, hospitals, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), psychiatrists, allied health workers, GPs, lawyers and directly from clients themselves.

We were successful in obtaining a contract to provide neuropsychology assessments for the Corrections Victoria Prisoner Disability Support Initiative (PDSI), a new service to better support the rehabilitation of prisoners with disability and complex needs and their transition back into the community. We are looking forward to receiving referrals and getting started in 2022.

We continued to hone our skills in telehealth-based neuropsychology assessments and in-person assessments with COVID Safe practices, including N95 masks and face shields. Diverge neuropsychologists have continued to show great resilience and flexibility, adapting at short notice to lockdowns and changing restrictions.

### Case study

Ms. R., a 28-year-old woman with severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a teenager and associated anxiety was referred by her Occupational Therapist to clarify her cognitive strengths and weaknesses and strategies to assist in everyday life. She was living with her supportive parents in regional Victoria but was struggling to engage in independent living skills and reported significant difficulties with memory and planning/ organisation. Her allied health services and community groups had also been disrupted by COVID restrictions, leading to significant social isolation.

The assessment was commenced as an in-person assessment, as this was permitted for routine allied healthcare at the time, but the second session had to be completed via telehealth due to increasing COVID-19 case numbers and lockdown. A technical run-through was helpful to ensure Ms. R was comfortable with the telehealth format.

On assessment, Ms. R demonstrated strengths in most intellectual skills and basic attention in the High Average range, with good self-monitoring and insight. Her relative weaknesses on the assessment were concrete reasoning, complex attention and planning/ organisation difficulties and severe memory and new learning impairments, consistent with traumatic brain injury.

In terms of everyday life, the assessment indicated Ms R. would present well in conversation and would be able to repeat back simple information immediately. However, she would be overwhelmed by lengthy information and would have difficulty



*Kathryn Hoskin*  
*Neuropsychology Assessment*  
*Coordinator*  
*DPsych (Clinical Neuropsychology)*

## NEUROPSYCHOLOGY ASSESSMENT UNIT REPORT (cont)

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recalling appointments and other complex information without a prompt or memory aid. She would benefit from routine, strategies and prompting. Given her reasonable self-monitoring and insight, she would be aware that she needs to put additional effort and deliberation into using strategies to manage her cognitive impairments. However, the 'flip-side' of this awareness and insight is that she would be more likely to experience anxiety, which can exacerbate cognitive issues as attentional resources are given to the anxious thoughts.

Ongoing Occupational Therapy, Neuropsychology and Physiotherapy was recommended to work together with Ms. R and her family to increase her independence and community participation. A referral to a psychiatrist specialised in acquired brain injury was also recommended. A feedback session was completed via telehealth and a written summary provided, including discussion of strategies to manage her cognitive issues and anxiety in everyday life.

*Kathryn Hoskin*  
*Neuropsychology Assessment*  
*Coordinator*  
*DPsych (Clinical Neuropsychology)*



## PAEDIATRIC SERVICE COORDINATORS REPORT

Another year, another very large number of telehealth sessions...

2021 was another year with many surprises and challenges thrown up by the ongoing Covid pandemic, as we attempted to support our paediatric clients, their parents, and their teachers with navigating the challenges of on-again, off-again in-school learning, and the impact of covid infections and isolation requirements on families and schools.

Paediatric referrals to Diverge in the twelve months between November 2020 and 2021 were significantly down on previous years. In comparison to the 28 referrals received in the preceding 12 months, only 16 referrals of children under the age of 18 were received in the 12 months up to November 2021. Twelve of these were new referrals and 4 re-referrals of previous Diverge clients, with twelve of the referrals being primarily for neuropsychology assessments and four for behaviour and support and school liaison. A little over half of these clients were funded through TAC, with the rest funded through NDIS and one by DFFH.

Of the new referrals, only two were TAC funded clients referred from directly after discharge as inpatients by VPRS at the Royal Children's Hospital, generally one of the largest referral sources. One likely contribution to this downturn in numbers may be the reported decrease in intracranial injuries in children due to fewer vehicles being on the road and reduced opportunities for children to be on their own in the community due to Covid lockdowns. While this is certainly a very welcome development in terms of child health, it has resulted in a significant change to referrals to the paediatric service during late 2020 and 2021.

As during 2020, much of the Diverge's paediatric work has been via Telehealth. School support group meetings and therapy team meetings have mostly been online. This practice appears likely to remain so well into the future as schools and funding agencies such as the TAC have wholeheartedly embraced the flexibility and convenience that online meetings offer even when restrictions on school visits are not in place, allowing a wider range of students "everyday people" and therapists to attend and share information.

Heads Together continues to be Diverge's main community partner, with participation in their online parent program during 2021, including topics such as "Beyond 16" and Circles of Support.



*Genevieve McMahon*

*Paediatric Coordinator*

*MA (Clinical Neuropsychology,*

*MCFT, Grad DIP (Mental Health Sciences)*

## TRAINING COORDINATORS REPORT

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As COVID-19 continues to be the gift that kept giving in 2021, Diverge continued to focus on online training to provide high-quality training to various agencies and organisations. We observed that the move to deliver exclusively online training increased overall uptake and requests from previous years.

Tailor-made training was developed and provided to the Magistrates Court of Victoria, Victim Services Support and Reform Groups, Darebin Support Services, and the Barwon Health Psychiatric Registrar Group. Our annual Early Career Behaviour Support Workshop was once again a sold-out event and included attendees from various stages in their neuropsychology careers. Attendees included students, registrars, and early career clinicians, all of whom were looking for practical education and training in behaviour support and interventions. Diverge clinicians also continue to provide client-specific training and education to various agencies, including attendant care providers, families, schools, and support groups.

Diverge continues to place great importance on providing individuals and organisations who work or live in the brain injury area with up-to-date training and education. This aims to improve the knowledge base, skill levels and understanding of individuals with brain injury and help improve their day-to-day life.

I would like to thank the Diverge team for continuing to provide quality training and education as part of our organisation. Our commitment to delivering high-quality training and education remains intact, and we look forward to continuing this long into the future.



*Dr Adrian Kamer*  
*Training Coordinator*  
*DPsych (Clinical Neuropsychology)*

## FINANCIAL REPORT

<b>Income</b>	<b>2021</b> \$	<b>2020</b> \$
<b><u>Health Services Income</u></b>		
Health Services Pty Ltd	52,737	119,365
Health services No GST	383,726	196,249
Medicare services	2,040	5,973
TAC services	459,681	496,207
<b>Gross profit from trading</b>	<b>898,184</b>	<b>817,794</b>
<b><u>Other Income</u></b>		
Interest received	1,276	671
Memberships Received	260	160
Total	1,536	831
<b><u>COVID-19 Government Assistance</u></b>	10,000	-
<b><u>Payments</u></b>	50,000	50,000
Cash Flow Boost	69,000	54,000
Job Keeper_		
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>1,028,720</b>	<b>922,625</b>

## FINANCIAL REPORT (CONT)

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>2021</b> \$	<b>2020</b> \$
Accountancy fees		•
Annual leave expense	4,778	
Assets written off	35,745	20
	54,114	,364
		-
Assessment forms	2,416	2,851
Bad debts	5,476	4,469
Bank charges	221	110
Bookkeeping fees	1,070	1,038
Body corporate fees	3,049	3,049
Computer expenses	8,406	5,811
Insurance	12,973	12,720
Internet and associated costs	990	996
Utilities – electricity & water	1,850	2,045
Rent	22	19
Library	,750	,250
Long service leave expense	54	52
	8,554	60,891
Office supplies	6,443	5,445
Rates and taxes	1,690	1,527
Room hire	214	162
Staff amenities	14,631	10,760
Staff training	5,093	3,594
Superannuation contributions	64,725	58,396
Telephone	3,987	4,783
Travelling expenses	6,759	6,126
Wages	718,989	658,337
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>984,980</b>	<b>882,776</b>
<b>SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT) ATTRIBUTABLE to the ASSOCIATION</b>	<b>43,740</b>	<b>39,849</b>

## FINANCIAL REPORT (CONT)

<b>Share Capital and Reserves</b>	<b>2021</b> \$	<b>2020</b> \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash at bank	209,042	121,814
Investment Account	21,770	18,264
Term Deposit Accounts	72,420	71,150
Petty cash	50	50
Trade debtors	115,559	56,823
Provision for doubtful debt	(6,690)	(6,690)
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>412,151</b>	<b>279,411</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Office renovations	•	17,207
Assessment tools	•	18,681
Computers	•	10,262
Furniture and Fitting	•	150
Website development cost		7,556
Preliminary setup cost	•	259
	•	
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>54,115</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>412,151</b>	<b>333,526</b>

## FINANCIAL REPORT (CONT)

	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Sundry creditor	22,098	27,387
Superannuation payable	•	4,898
PAYG Withholding payable	10,651	9,477
GST collected/paid	(1,362)	(1,058)
GST adjustment	•	97
Provision for Annual Leave		58,886
Provision for long service leave	94,631	97,968
	106,522	
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	232,540	197,655
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	232,540	197,655
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	179,611	135,871
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Accumulated members funds	179,611	135,871
<b>PROFIT/DEFICIT</b>	(39,849)	(39,849)
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	135,871	135,871
<b>Total available for appropriation</b>	131,752	131,752
<b>Retained earnings at the end of the financial year</b>	135,871	96,022

## CONTACT DETAILS

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